

Maryland Numismatist



Gold Sovereigns



If your address label says you're paid thru 2019, please submit dues.
The raffle has been delayed. See page 14 for details.

Summer, 2020 Volume 48 – No. 2

**The
Maryland
State
Numismatic
Association,
Inc.**



The *MARYLAND NUMISMATIST* is the quarterly publication of MSNA and is distributed to all members in good standing without additional cost.

<http://mdstatenumisassn.org>

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President's Message



Greetings. I hope all are well. I am writing from my pandemic bunker in Montgomery County, wondering if this county will even start to open up. I could use a haircut. We are planning on having a Zoom meeting for the Maryland State Numismatic Association (MSNA) very soon – probably before you read this. We need to decide what to do about the raffle, and there are some issues regarding exhibition policies and other higher administrative matters that need to be discussed. I hope we have enough members for a quorum, or at least enough for a good discussion.

There is a lot of uncertainty regarding numismatic activities. As you all probably know, the June Whitman show in Baltimore is cancelled. The U.S. Mint has postponed the launching of the Maryland Innovation dollar coin indefinitely. The Montgomery Coin Club meets in a Senior Center, and the County announced that these are closed into October. We have moved to Zoom meetings. I am curious what other clubs are doing. Coin collecting has been a real pleasant diversion this spring. I've sorted through a pile of coins that I acquired in recent months, updated lists, replaced some poorly done 2x2s, and otherwise done a lot of organizational work. I read several *Numismatist* articles that I had set aside, and reread some numismatic books. I did make one purchase. The Pobjoy Mint produced a £1 Apollo 11 commemorative for the Ascension Islands that I thought was attractive and relevant, given that there was a tracking station in operation there for the mission. And the coin was issued in titanium, and for no good reason I have always wanted a titanium coin.

Ascension Island, population 800, had a bit of excitement this May. A dozen members of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Birds had travelled to South Africa and sailed to the even more remote Gough Island, population six, to save seabirds from predatory giant mice (scary). The pandemic hit, and South Africa would not take them back, so they sailed for twelve days to Ascension, and from there caught an infrequent RAF flight back to the UK. One suspects that the Ascension Islands will issue another coin to commemorate the event. I like birds and oppose giant mice, so I'll buy it. Anyway, there is no COVID-19 problem on Ascension, so I may go there for a haircut.

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Obituaries

Raymond Dillard passed March 8, 2020 in Fenton, Michigan at age 94. He spent 62 years with his wife Betty, until she died in 2006. Ray worked for General Motors for 37 years and retired in 1980. Soon after, in 1982, Ray started creating elongated coins, an activity he was best known for in the hobby, although he started collecting coins in the 1960s. He eventually amassed the largest elongated coin collection, specializing in the older pieces. He joined The Elongated Collectors (TEC) in 1987, served five terms as President, two as Vice President, four as Treasurer, and one as Secretary between 1987 and 2009. He is a Numismatic Ambassador and received ANA's Glen Smedley, Adna Wilde, and Presidential Awards. He was also active with the Masons, and he joined MSNA in 1997 as member 736. One can view a 42-minute interview video with him from 2015 at tecnews.org/ana-legacy-series-ray-dillard.

Robert Andrew Ross passed June 14, 2019 at age 81. He joined MSNA in 1987 and was member 595. He worked for DuPont for 35 years.

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Exhibit Results at the NMS in Atlanta

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, coin shows throughout the world have been cancelled. One of the last major shows held before the shutdown was ANA's National Money Show, held this year in Atlanta, Georgia.



MSNA life member **Michael Shutterly** exhibit *Viva le Franc* won second place in History and Politics, presented by ANA Director Greg Lyon. His exhibit *How Money Dies* won third in Economics, and *Ludwig van Beethoven* won third in The Arts, presented by ANA VP Ralph Ross.



MSNA Treasurer and Editor **Simcha Kuritzky** won first place in Economics for *Israel's Two-Decade Long Road to Standardized Gold Coinage* and in Science for *Feline Paper Money Type Set*. His exhibits *The Roaring Lion of Megiddo* (presented by Michael Ellis) and *The Heh Amulet* won second place in Geography and The Arts, respectively. *Feline Paper Money Type Set* also won third place Best of Show, presented by namesake Steven D'Ippolito.

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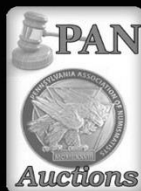
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The Gold British Sovereign – A Good Deal?

by Mark Benvenuto, MSNA #R-825

The British Royal Mint has been pounding out gold sovereigns for over five centuries. These had their heyday as a worldwide circulating coin about a century and a half ago. Although they do not circulate today, they still command a certain amount of respect among dealers, collectors, and investors. The price of gold has generally risen in 2019 and 2020, and that means the price of all sorts of gold coins are also on the rise. Since classic United States gold is heavily collected and commands high premiums, it might be a time to examine contemporary coins like the sovereign in more detail.

The British sovereign originated as the English sovereign, a gold coin issued before the union with Scotland and Ireland. These are wonderfully historic coins, but their prices tend to reflect their age and history. As well, they can be difficult to find in the States, even at a decent-sized show or in a well-stocked dealer's inventory.

What we might want to call the modern British sovereign has its start in with the post-Napoleonic War coinage reform of 1816. By this time, all coins were struck using steam-powered presses in collars, making coinage uniform and difficult to clip. But only the planchets were uniform, as there are faces of many different monarchs, starting with George III and his sons George IV and William IV. These coins are scarcer than the later sovereigns, but can be found for under double bullion value in a nice circulated fine condition, or as ex-jewelry pieces. George III's bust with laurel crown faces right on his coins of 1817-20, and Benedetto Pistrucci's masterful portrait of an equestrian Patron Saint George killing a dragon within a garter dominates the reverse. Pistrucci was a colorful and talented character himself. The praise this design has earned over the years would probably have satisfied what many people said was Pistrucci's oversized ego. George IV started with a similar sovereign but left-facing bust and the garter removed from 1821-25. That year the Mint switched to a thinner (less accurate) portrait with no laurel in his hair, and the crowned British shield with his titles were shown on the reverse through 1830. William IV faces right and the titles were moved back to the obverse, the shield enlarged with only ANNO and the date on the reverse. His coins were minted 1831-37.

Then a special young lady's ascended to the throne, and the sovereigns of this young Queen Victoria are the first that are easy to collect. The simplest collection of Queen Victoria sovereigns would be one coin with each of her different portraits. Struck from 1838 to 1901, that wide span of years includes three portraits, starting with what are now called the young head sovereigns. These show the Queen with no crown, but the design has become a favorite among collectors. There are two reverses: a shield within an olive wreath with Her Royal Highness' titles (1838-74) and George slaying the dragon with only the date (1871-85). Victoria removed the Hanoverian horse arms at center from her shield.

As her reign progressed, the dear Queen changed portraits, adding a crown. The jubilee portrait, issued 1887-92 (starting in her fiftieth year of reign) shows her sporting one royal piece of headwear that seems far too small for her royal noggin. According to legend, she would wear the big official one when she had to, but didn't like its weight. So, being queen, in 1870 she had a tiny one made. Apparently, she paid for it herself, and willed it to Britain. It is on display with the crown jewels in the Tower of London today. In 1893, a more mature portrait was adopted, showing a tiara peeking out from under her widow's veil (Victoria insisted on appearing veiled after her beloved Prince Albert died in 1861).

Queen Victoria's sovereigns were issued all the way to 1901, which makes a date run of them something of a challenge (but a fun one!). Yet the very next year after her death, it was her son Edward VII who got his face plunked onto the sovereign – and to all the other coins of Britain, for that matter. He reigned until 1910, which means that the 1902 – 1910 date run is a lot easier to complete, as there are no scarce dates.

After Bertie – as only his close relatives called him – it was George V who ran the show in Great Britain, and one can be forgiven for thinking his sovereigns went with him all the way to his death in 1936. Alas, the truth is a bit stranger. King George V had more time on the throne than his old man, but the gold sovereign died a quiet death as a circulating coin during his reign, in 1915, due to the Great War (WWI). That doesn't mean it went the way of the dodo bird, as there have been plenty made since then, only they circulated according to bullion value, mostly in the Middle East. There are sovereigns dated 1916, 1917, and even 1925 when Britain returned to the gold standard. All but the 1917 can be found (with effort) for a little over bullion value in circulated condition. The 1925 date was restruck a quarter century later, making it reasonably available today.

Next was Edward VIII, who reigned less than one year before abdicating so he could marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Gold sovereigns were struck with the 1937 coronation date, but since Edward left the throne in December, 1936, these were never issued (generally they are considered patterns) and are excessively rare; one sold recently for one million pounds. His brother King George VI stepped in for the top job, and yet, since the sovereign was no longer being made as a circulating piece, there is only one date featuring his time there, the 1937, struck for the coronation proof sets, and folks don't see many of them surface all too often.

The series of most affordable and collectible sovereigns are bracketed between two amazing British queens. Elizabeth II first showed up on the sovereigns in 1957 to meet the demand of Middle Eastern merchants (which had previously been met by counterfeiters in Beirut who issued full weight "replicas"). A bit like Victoria, she now has several portraits that grace these gold pieces. But even that first image, used from 1957 to 1968, graces rather affordable coins today, as far as gold goes. There was a break in production until 1974, but that year a more mature portrait came out on the sovereign. These portraits were updated in 1985 and again in 2001. And the production has not stopped ever since.

Special one-year type commemoratives were issued in 1989 for the 500th anniversary of the sovereign, using a seated portrait of Elizabeth II based on the designs of those first Tudor coins, and in 2002 for Elizabeth's jubilee (fifty years on the throne), with an olive wreath surrounding a crowned "spade" shield similar to Victoria's earliest sovereigns. The years 2005 and 2012 saw special, modernistic portraits of an armored George slaying the dragon. All of these coins, even the commemoratives, can be bought for a small premium over bullion value.

Sovereigns were also minted outside of Britain. Those with the I (India) mintmark were struck in Bombay, C (Canada) in Ottawa, SA (South Africa) in Pretoria, and S in Sydney, P in Perth and M in Melbourne (all in Australia). A quick and fun collection would be one from each mint.

Today, British sovereigns remain very collectible, but also stand in the shadow of United States gold, at least among American collectors. A person can have a lot of fun, and not spend all that much, simply trying to collect the common dates among this centuries-old series. Prices are often close to the spot price of gold. Good luck to any and all of us who give this worthy coin and this series a try.



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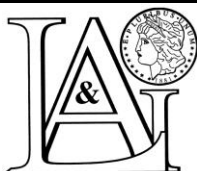
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Local News

At a virtual Board meeting, **MSNA** decided to merge the 2020 and 2021 raffles. The drawing will now take place at the Whitman Expo in autumn of 2021. The prizes will be the same. All tickets with the 2020 date on them will still be valid and we will keep the stubs for both years and they will be mixed together for the draw. We sell the majority of our tickets at the Whitman Expos and so would incur substantial losses if we held the raffle at the time originally scheduled.

The last physical meeting of the **Montgomery County Coin Club** was in March when Club President Don Stepita spoke on the Morgan dollars of 1878, Peace dollars of 1921, and the 1878 Trade dollars.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, most clubs have cancelled their meetings. MSNA Treasurer and Editor **Simcha Kuritzky** arranged Zoom meetings for two clubs, and gave a talk on good luck medals and amulets at the **Montgomery County Coin Club** May meeting and on the money and medals of the Revolutions of 1848 at the **Washington Numismatic Society** May meeting.



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What's Your Sign?

Part Forty- Five: Polish Medals

by Simcha Kuritzky, NLG

These two medal sets came from the Warsaw Mint. The first set is dated 2010 and each medal is of 32mm diameter brass and weighs 13 grams. They show the zodiac sign with a sigil against a starry background with the constellation drawn over it on the obverse, and a famous person born under that sign on the reverse. The sign and person names are in cursive script. The sign's dates also appear on the obverse after the Polish word *honorowany* (honored) in European fashion, with the day first in Western (so-called Arabic) numerals and the month second in Roman numerals. The person's birthdate appears after the abbreviation *ur* for *urodzony* (born). Strangely, Virgo ends on September 22 but Libra starts September 20, and January 20 belongs to both Capricorn and Aquarius. Libra should start September 23 and Aquarius should start January 21.



Da Vinci is shown with his drawing Vitruvian Man and birth date 15.IV. 1452. Dali stares out with his melted clock on a tree branch behind, and birth date 11.V.1903. Marilyn Monroe looks over her shoulder at her birth date 01.VI.1926.



Amundsen, the first human to reach the South Pole, appears in his signature furs with a map of Antarctica and birth date 16.VII.1872. Napoleon appears charging on his horse over birth date 15.VIII.1769. Author, natural scientist, and statesman von Goethe is seated $\frac{3}{4}$ right above his birthday 28.VIII.1749.



An elderly civil rights leader Gandhi faces forward next to a map of post-independence India with his birthdate 02.X.1869. Artist Picasso’s bust faces forward with upraised right hand next to a square, abstract painting, with his birthdate 25.XI.1881 below. Polish First Marshal Pilsudski’s uniformed bust faces right at his name and birthdate 5.XII.1867.



Singer Marlene Dietrich faces forward next to her birthdate 27.XII.1901. Composer Mozart faces ¾ left with a musical score and his birthdate 27.01.1756. An elderly Einstein faces forward next to his famous formula $E=mc^2$ and birthdate 14.III.1879.

Zodiac Sign	Dates	Person
♈ Aries	21.III–20.IV	Leonardo da Vinci
♉ Taurus	21.IV–20.V	Salvador Dali
♊ Gemini	21.V–20.VI	Marilyn Monroe
♋ Cancer	21.VI–22.VII	Roald Amundsen
♌ Leo	23.VII–22.VIII	Napoleon Bonaparte
♍ Virgo	23.VIII–22.IX	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
♎ Libra	20.IX–23.X	Mahatma Gandhi
♏ Scorpio	24.X–22.XI	Pablo Picasso
♐ Sagittarius	23.XI–20.XII	Josef Pilsudski
♑ Capricorn	21.XII–20.I	Marlene Dietrich
♒ Aquarius	20.I–18.II	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
♓ Pisces	19.II–20.III	Albert Einstein

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Also 32mm but 14.1 grams sterling silver are medals with a traditional design. All have the same zodiac clock reverse. The outer circle has Roman numerals from I to XII twice, presumably AM and PM. There is a pendulum crossing at 11:30, a stick with the moon at 2:20 in Taurus, and a stick with the sun at 4:40 in Aries. In the center is a dragon next to the moon. At top, Gemini sits between 12 and 2, and other signs progress counter-clockwise. The obverse shows each sign from an old map. The celestial equator is a heavy dashed line. The sign's name in Latin and a color sigil are near the bottom. Near the sigil or the edge is a small Ag 925 and the hallmark of the Warsaw Mint, an M over a W. The featured sign is shown in relief, while adjacent signs and other constellations are named but shown as hollow line drawings.



Aries shows moth and triangle constellations above and a fish monster below, while Taurus faces right to Orion's shield. Gemini is identified as Castor and Pollux. Castor holds a whip and Pollux a club, and the outline of Cancer shows clearly to the right. The sigil of Aries is red, Taurus is cyan, and Gemini is yellow.



Cancer is shown as a lobster. Pollux's outline can be seen on the left, Canis minor as a dog below and left, the head of Hydra appears bottom

right, and Leo's muzzle is top right. On his medal, Leo faces left at Cancer's claw with hydra's coiled body below. Directly above is Leo minor and below is the sextant. Virgo's head appears near Leo's tail. Virgo's constellation is sideways, so on her medal, the equator runs vertically. She is shown with wings but no wheat sheaf. To her left is Corvus the Crow, and to her right is a jellyfish and man in boots. Cancer's sigil is purple, Leo's is golden and Virgo's is green.



Libra is shown as a balance scale, with Virgo's sandaled foot at left, Scorpio's claws at right, and a piece of a Serpent at top right. Scorpio is shown facing left with a serpent entwined around a man above, wolf directly below, and Sagittarius' arrow at right. Sagittarius appears as a naked, bearded centaur with knocked bow facing left. A crown appears by his front hooves, and Capricorn's head is above his flowing tail. Libra's sigil is brown, Scorpio's is blue, and Sagittarius' is orange.



Capricorn is shown with goat's head and front hooves facing left and a fish tail body. Sagittarius' rear is on his left and Aquarius' left arm to his right. Aquarius is a short-haired man holding out a vase with water flowing out in a stream. Almost all of Capricorn is visible to his left, a whale is by his feet, and Pegasus' head is above. Pisces are two fish connected by a rope. Pegasus' wing appears above and left, the tail of Aries' fish monster is below, and Andromeda appears as a woman above and right. Capricorn's sigil is white, Aquarius' is aqua, and Pisces' is peach.



**Maryland State Numismatic
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Membership Application/Renewal

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Fee of \$15 (club), \$10 (individual) or \$2 (under 18) must accompany this form for calendar year dues (\$5 individual after August 1). Life member upgrades are: \$300 for clubs, \$200 (age 50 & under), \$125 (51-65), \$75 (66 & over). You must be a regular member for 3 years before attaining life membership. Pay by check or money order.

Maryland Coin Show Dates

All shows have free admission. Only the Whitman show does not have free parking.

All shows are subject to cancellation due to the Pandemic, so call or check the CoinShows.com web site before planning to attend. As of June 1, 2020, the following shows had not been cancelled:

2020

13 Sept. – Annapolis Coin and Currency Show, Elks Lodge #622, 2 Pythian Drive, Edgewater, MD; 9-4.

2-4 Oct. – CEO Coins, Currency & Treasures Ocean City Show, Ocean City (Roland E. Powell) Convention Center, 4001 Ocean Highway & 40th Street, Ocean City, MD; Fri. 9-5, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4.

24 Oct.–Baltimore Stamp & Coin Show, Maryland State Fair Grounds, Mosner Miller Building, 2200 York Road, Timonium, MD; 9-4.

14-15 Nov. – Western Maryland Fall Coin Club Show, Fire Hall #1, 421 National Highway, Lavale, MD. Sat. 9-4, Sun. 9-3.

21-22 Nov. – Frederick Coin and Currency Show, Elk Lodge #684, 289 Willowdale Drive, Frederick, MD; 9-4:30.

29 Nov. – Annapolis Coin and Currency Show, Elks Lodge #622, 2 Pythian Drive, Edgewater, MD; 9-4.

5 Dec. – Baltimore Stamp & Coin Show, Maryland State Fair Grounds, Mosner Miller Building, 2200 York Road, Timonium, MD; 9-4.

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	Spring	Summer	Autumn
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